

Message Text

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41

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 OMB-01 EB-11 TRSE-00 COME-00 INT-08 NIC-01

ACDA-19 GAC-01 RSR-01 /156 W
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R 091002 Z APR 73

FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 270

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USINT CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 191

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IZ, KU, IR, PBOR

SUBJECT: IRAQ- KUWAIT BORDER CLASH

1. SUMMARY: DOMESTICALLY, IRAQ STILL DOWNPLAYING BORDER DIFFERENCE WITH KUWAIT, BUT IT NOW CLEAR THAT BAATH REGIME CONSIDERS ITS TERRITORIAL DEMANDS AS VITAL AND JUSTIFIED. SOVIETS MAY BE PLEASED, BUT IRAQIS HAVE NEEDED NO SOVIET INSTIGATION THUS FAR. DANGER OF MAJOR ESCALATION SEEMS PRESENT. END SUMMARY.

2. FORMIN ABDUL BAQI RETURNED BAGHDAD APRIL 8 FROM 3 DAY VISIT KUWAIT. HE MADE SHORT STATEMENT THAT DISCUSSIONS WITH KUWAIT WOULD CONTINUE. IRAQI MEDIA CONTINUE TO TREAT BORDER DISPUTE AS ROUTINE DIFFERENCE OF OPINION. YET IT IS CLEAR FROM IRAQI STATEMENTS ELSEWHERE, IRAQI BUILDUP OF ARAFAT AS MEDIATOR, AND THRUST OF RECENT
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GOI PROPAGANDA THAT TERRITORY AT STAKE IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO IRAQ, POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY AND MILITARILY.

3. IT SEEMS CERTAIN THAT MARCH 20 IRAQI ATTACK WAS PLANNED AT HIGHEST LEVELS OF GOI AND THAT IRAQI OBJECTIVES GO WELL BEYOND DEMARCATION OF BORDER. IN REMARKABLY FRANK INTERVIEW WITH BEIRUT'S WEEKLY AS-SAYYAD (NOT PUBLISHED HERE) FORMIN ABDUL BAQI ADMITTED THAT PROBLEM WENT DEEPER THAN BORDER ISSUE AND HE DENIED THAT ANY LEGAL DOCUMENT FIXING BORDER EXISTS. ABDUL BAQI STRESSED THAT THE TWO ISLANDS (PRESUMABLY WARBA AND BOUBIYAN) " ARE VITAL TO US. ANY FORCE ON THEM COULD BLOCK ROAD TO US. HOW COULD WE BECOME A GULF STATE IN THIS CASE?" HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT IRAQI CONDITION FOR DEMARCATION OF BORDERS IS THAT AREA OF TWO ISLANDS BE IRAQI.

4. IRAQI DETERMINATION TO HAVE SOME KIND OF CONTROL OVER THIS AREA IS RESULT OF FACT THAT ITS MAJOR PORT OF BASRA CONSIDERED HOSTAGE TO IRAN AND ONLY ALTERNATIVE PORT IS UMM QASR. UMM QASR IS ALREADY PRINCIPAL PORT FOR RECEIVING MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND MAY SOON REPLACE BASRA AS HEADQUARTERS IRAQI NAVY. SECONDLY, IRAQ PLANS TO CONSTRUCT DEEP SEA OIL TERMINAL AND MOST LIKELY SITE IS OUT IN GULF OFF UMM QASR. PIPELINE WOULD PRESUMABLY GO THROUGH AREA DOMINATED BY WARBA AND BOUBIYAN ISLANDS. THIRDLY, ABDUL BAQI WAS QUITE HONEST IN SAYING THAT IRAQ COULD NOT BE GULF STATE WITHOUT SECURE PORT IN GULF.

4. WHY NOW? IPC SETTLEMENT CERTAINLY CONTRIBUTED TO IRAQI CONFIDENCE THAT IT COULD NOW MOVE. SECONDLY, GOI PROFESSES TO SEE GROWING ALLIANCE BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN AND FEARS THAT KUWAIT WILL SOON BE DRAWN IN TO THIS " U. S. SPONSORED ALLIANCE OF REACTIONARIES".

5. WHILE IRAQI MOVES MAY HAVE SOVIET SUPPORT, I BELIEVE IT IS PREMATURE TO ATTRIBUTE IRAQI ACTIONS ON BORDER TO SOVIETS. IRAQI OBJECTIVES DESCRIBED ABOVE GIVE, IN IRAQI VIEW, MORE THAN AMPLE JUSTIFICATION AND BAATH LEADERS DO NOT NEED SOVIETS TO TELL THEM WHERE IRAQ'S VITAL INTERESTS LIE. VISIT OF SOVIET NAVAL COMMANDER IN CHIEF AND THREE SOVIET SHIPS AT THIS TIME CERTAINLY SEEMS TO SIGNIFY SOVIET SUPPORT FOR IRAQ'S AMBITIONS IN GULF, BUT IT MAY BE THAT IN THIS INSTANCE BAATH ARE CLEVERLY USING SOVIETS RATHER THAN VICE- VERSA.

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6. SEEN FROM BAGHDAD, THIS CONFLICT HOLDS REAL DANGER OF MILITARY

ESCALATION INVOLVING CONTIGUOUS STATES. IRAQIS ARE UNLIKELY TO
GIVE UP DEMANDS WHICH, IN THEIR VIEW, REPRESENT ONLY WAY
OF BREAKING IRANIAN STRANGLEHOLD OVER THEIR ACCESS TO GULF.
LOWRIE

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